

being aesthetic is not a work of art no more than a phenomenon that is aesthetic without at the same time being autonomous is a work of art. What then makes a phenomenon autonomous? What then makes a phenomenon aesthetic? A phenomenon that is autonomous is one that is self-contained/is one which functions solely in terms of its own given laws inevitabilities/is one which does not refer outside of itself which has no past which has no future. [What are some of the identifying characteristics of alleged works of art which--even though they may be aesthetic--are not autonomous?] A phenomenon that is aesthetic is one the material, formal, expressive dimensions of which together constitute an intrinsically interesting phenomenon for perception. [What are some of the identifying characteristics of alleged works of art which--even though they may be autonomous--are not aesthetic?] Such are the qualities/characteristics/values of all works of art. The critic who addresses himself to a phenomenon in order to determine if that phenomenon is at the same time autonomous and aesthetic therefore appraises that phenomenon in terms of those qualities/characteristics/values of all works of art. If the phenomenon in question possesses those qualities/characteristics/values it is a work of art. If the phenomenon in question does not possess those qualities/characteristics/values it is not a work of art. All phenomena that possess those qualities/characteristics/values are--it must be understood--equal (which does not certainly mean that all phenomena that are at the same time autonomous and aesthetic are of equal importance in the history of art but it does certainly mean that all phenomena that are at the same time autonomous and aesthetic are equal). Neither those criteria nor any other criteria therefore can be utilized to determine if work of art "A" for example is "better" for example than work of art "B" or to determine if work of art "L" for example is "more whatever" than work of art "R" for example. It is impossible to speak of the quality of being autonomous in relative terms just as it is impossible to speak of the quality of being aesthetic in relative terms. A phenomenon--it must be repeated--either is or is not at the same time autonomous and aesthetic. Those persons who believe that a given work of art can be "more" autonomous and/or aesthetic than another work of art fail to understand a great deal certainly about works of art and would therefore be well-advised to always remain silent.